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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S PROPOSAL TO  
ABOLISH THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL, AND THE U.S.

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage February 22 on U.S. National Security Council Senior Acting Director for Asian Affairs Dennis Wilder's visit to Taiwan February 13-17 to persuade President Chen Shui-bian to abandon his plan to abolish the National Unification Council (NUC) and National Unification Guidelines (NUG); U.S. arms procurements; and new Premier Su Tseng-chang's administrative report to the Legislative Yuan

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Tuesday. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "U.S. Secret Envoy Comes [to Taiwan] to Stop Bian from Abolishing NUC and NUG but Meets with Rejection," while the front-page story of the pro-unification "United Daily News" said: "United States Sends Secret Envoy to Meet with Bian But Fails to Persuade [Chen] to Stop the Abolition of the NUC and NUG." The "United Daily News" ran a news story on its third page with the headline: "Dennis Wilder [Conveys U.S.] Last Diplomatic Message; Washington Really Means It This Time." The "China Times" also carried a news story on its fourth page topped with the headline: "Is Washington's [Move to] Expose [the Taiwan Visit of] Its Special Envoy an Alternative Way to Pressure Bian?" The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, on the other hand, ran a banner headline on its second page that said: "[Taiwan's National Security Council's] Study on [President Chen's Proposal to] Abolish the NUC and NUG Will Be Submitted to the President This Week."

With regard to U.S. arms procurements, most papers reported on Defense Minister Lee Jye's remarks at the Legislative Yuan Tuesday in which he said his ministry needs all three weaponry items listed in the U.S. arms procurement bill, but added that he has cancelled the plan to upgrade Taiwan's PAC-2 missile batteries and will not include the budget for PAC-3 missiles in the bill in order to show respect to the opposition party.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, journalist Sean Liu said in a news analysis in the "United Daily News" that Washington is really concerned that President Chen is "pushing for a plan that he did not talk about [publicly] in an attempt to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait." Professor Chen I-hsin of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies also opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" that Washington can tell the DPP government via private channels [e.g. sending an envoy to Taiwan] why the DPP should not rashly abolish NUC

and NUG. If Chen still insists on carrying out his plan, the article added, Washington should then make the 23 million people of Taiwan understand the danger caused by the abolition of the NUC and NUG. Washington correspondent James Wang criticized Washington in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," saying that the United States has deviated from its major interests by failing to proactively maintain the Taiwan people's right to self-determination and for allowing China to interfere in Taiwan's domestic affairs. End summary.

A) "The United States Is Not Simply Concerned About [President Chen Shui-bian's] Proposal to Abolish National Unification Council but Bian's 'Next Step'"

Journalist Sean Liu said in a news analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/22):

". Like the reasons why Washington was concerned about Taiwan's defensive referendum in 2003, the focus of U.S. concern this time is not simply 'whether [Taiwan] will abolish the National Unification Council and National Unification Guidelines.' Instead, Washington is concerned that President Chen is pushing for a plan that he did not talk about [publicly] in an attempt to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. In other words, the United States is concerned about Chen's 'next step.' .

"Taiwan relies on the United States' assistance in areas such as [the island's] security and foreign relations. There are many ways that the United States can penalize Taiwan. Chen did not pay too much attention when Washington sent National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Michael Green to Taiwan in 2003 to communicate about the referendum issue. President George W. Bush, as a result, soon 'taught Taiwan a lesson' personally. If the Presidential Office continues to overlook the U.S. warning this time, Taipei had better be mentally prepared about how severely Washington will chastise Taiwan."

B) "When U.S. Envoy Fails to Stop [Chen] from Abolishing the National Unification Council ."

Professor Chen I-hsin of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/22):

". [Some] DPP officials mistakenly compared the referendum held in 2004 with [President Chen Shui-bian's] proposal to abolish the NUC and NUG. They believe that as long as Taiwan stands firm in its position, the follow-up developments will be just like last time where the then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was opposed to Taiwan

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holding a referendum, gave in. However, the DPP officials overlooked the fact that the referendum on [buying] missiles and [Taiwan's] mainland policy differs from the move to abolish the NUC and NUG in terms of these issues' levels [of importance]. The referendum was simply about a public policy, whereas the move to abolish the NUC and NUG has entered the level of national security. If [Taiwan] abolishes the NUC and NUG, followed by the holding of a referendum on a new constitution that seeks to change the island's national flag and national title, it will mean that the matter has entered the constitutional level and has thus directly touched the red line drawn by the United States.

"As a result, U.S. President George W. Bush will ask his secret envoy to clearly tell the Chen Shui-bian

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administration that if Washington gives in with regard to the abolition of the NUC and NUG, it is akin to agreeing to the DPP government's [plan] to remove the last safety valve for maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait. [If] the

United States fails to stop the DPP government from abolishing NUC and NUG, it will likewise fail in stopping [Taiwan's plan to hold] a referendum on the new constitution and other future moves pushing for Taiwan independence. Once Beijing uses forces against Taiwan, forcing Washington to make a choice between Beijing and Taipei, Washington's decision may not be something that the Taiwan people are happy to see.

"Nevertheless, the United States can make it clear to the DPP government via a private channel why the latter should not rashly abolish the NUC and NUG. If the Chen Shui-bian administration still insists on going along with its plan, Washington should then make the 23 million people of Taiwan understand the danger caused by the abolition of the NUC and NUG."

C) "The Interests of Superpowers and Taiwan's Democratic Choices"

Washington correspondent James Wang said in the "Washington Review" column in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] (2/22):

". The United States supports Taiwan's democracy, but it does not recognize Taiwan's democratic results, [and] even restricts Taiwan's democratic development. Washington holds no particular position toward [China-Taiwan] `unification', but it goes by China's position [by saying] it `does not support Taiwan independence.' Washington supports Taiwan's right to reject China's annexation [of the island], but it suppresses the [Taiwan people's] democratic principle of self-determination. .

"The United States not only fails to proactively safeguard Taiwan people's rights of self-determination but also allows China to interfere with Taiwan's domestic affairs and use it as a means to annex Taiwan. The United States has abandoned the democratic and just position it should have and deviated from its major interests. . Where will Taiwan's long-term interests lie if its people just sit back and let the United States constrain the island and allow China to sabotage the island's national security via a foreign political party? . Now that Taiwan people are their own masters, who can they blame if they don't stand up and fight the actions of a big country [i.e. the United States]? ."

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